

News Release

U of M Crookston Senior Heather Donati-Lews Presents Research at 2010 National Conference of Undergraduate Research at University of Montana in Missoula

By Itollefs on Friday, April 23, 2010

The University of Minnesota Crookston was represented at the 2010 National Conference of Undergraduate Research (NCUR) by Heather Donati-Lewis, who presented her research titled "Common Spices and Uncommon Properties." A senior from Narcoossee, Fla., Donati-Lewis is an equine science major. Her research was led by U of M Crookston faculty mentors Brian Dingmann, Ph.D., and Venu Mukku, Ph.D., who accompanied her to the conference.



Donati-Lewis's research focused on the anti-fungal properties of thirty-seven different but common spices and herbs, such as Thevetia peruviana or yellow oleander. She tested the plant's ability to eliminate an important enzyme used in building fungal cell walls. The research yielded two promising leads that may one day be used either as a fungicide or insecticidal product. "It turns out that this enzyme is used by both fungi and insects and therefore could apply to either pest," according to Donati-Lewis. "The possibilities are endless."



Nearly 2,900 people representing over 350 institutions of higher education attended the 24th annual NCUR, hosted by the University of Montana in Missoula on April 15-17. Donati-Lewis was selected to give an oral presentation at the conference from a pool of 2,600 students who applied. Less than half the applicants were selected for this honor.

"I am just so happy for Heather to have been selected and then represent the campus so well at the meeting," Dingmann said. "The conference celebrates and honors the very best research by top undergraduates from all over the country."

The conference hosted four plenary speakers including R. Carlos Nakai, the world's premier performer of the Native American flute; Steven Running, professor of ecology at the University of Montana; William David Burns, founder and principal investigator of Science Education for New Civic Engagements and Responsibilities; and Henriette Löwisch, an international journalist and professor.

Students have the opportunity to view other students' posters and exhibits and attend oral presentations. NCUR began in 1987 at the University of North Carolina in Asheville. The conference is held annually to promote undergraduate research and creative activity in all fields of study.

Today the University of Minnesota Crookston delivers more than 25 bachelor's degree programs and 50 concentrations, including several online degrees, in agriculture and natural resources; arts, humanities and social sciences; business; and math, science and technology. With an enrollment of about 1,300 undergraduates, the Crookston campus offers a supportive, close-knit atmosphere that leads to a prestigious University of Minnesota degree. "Small Campus. Big Degree." To learn more, visit www.umcrookston.edu.

In the photo at top, left: Venu Mukku, Ph.D.; Heather Donati-Lewis; and Brian Dingmann, Ph.D.

In the photo at lower, right: Senior Heather Donati-Lewis presents at NCUR in April.

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